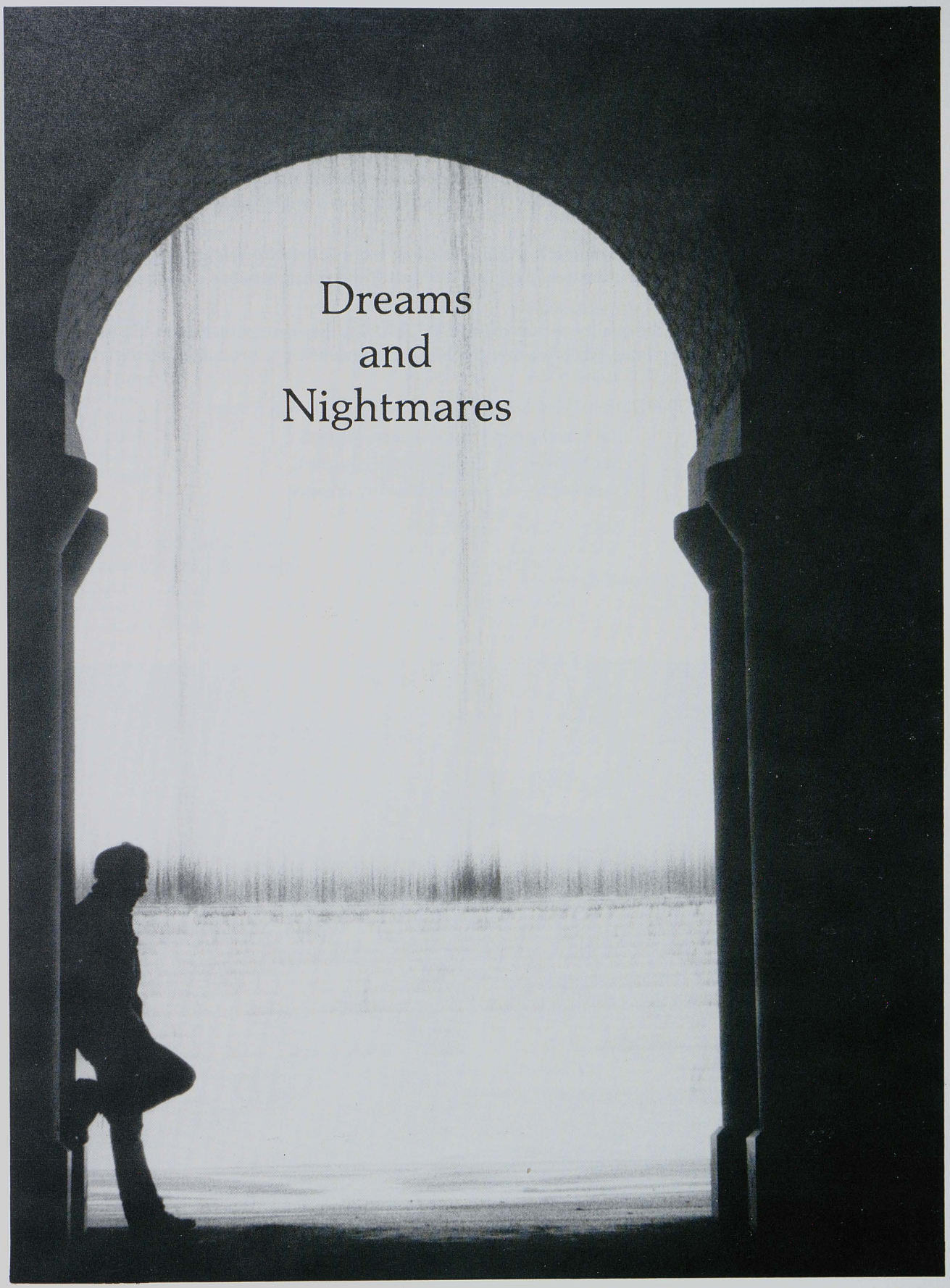
TJC Touchstone

Spring 1988



THE LONELY DREAMER by Andrew G. Correll

Foreword

The *TJC Touchstone* staff is pleased to present *Dreams and Nightmares*. As you peruse, we ask that you consider the enormous task in producing this issue.

The theme of this third edition of *TJC Touchstone* introduced many challenges to the volunteer student staff. Submissions were sensitive and diverse in subject matter and style. They imposed difficulty in distinguishing the most excellent submissions from the almost excellent. Teamwork was unquestionably necessary in order to select a compatible sampling from all entries. Surprisingly, it was as enjoyable as it was challenging to work with this year's submissions.

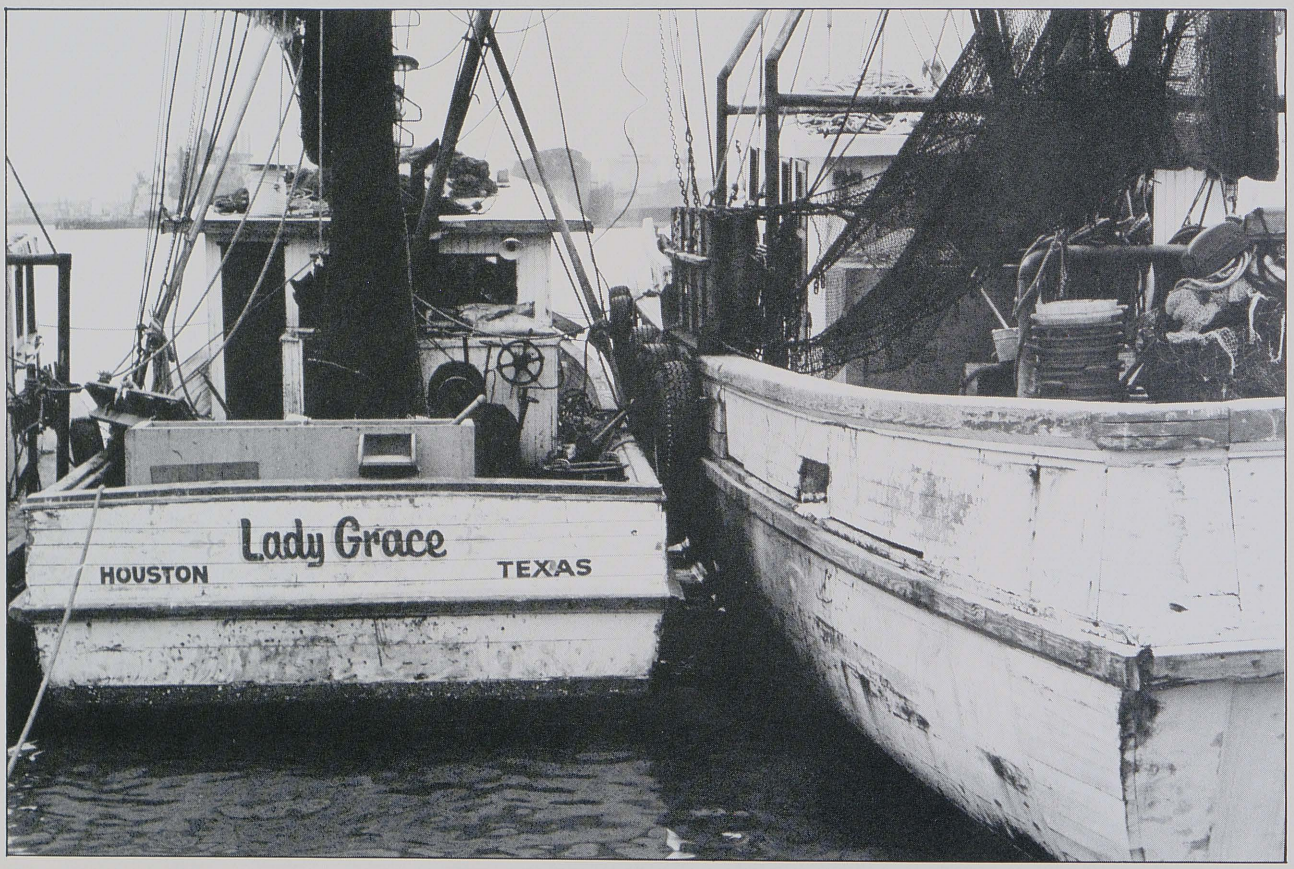
Ensured anonymity of authorship was maintained and critiquing was achieved by at least seven individual student readers scoring each piece and ultimately by group discussion and voting sessions. Space within the magazine was the final judge.

We as a staff are grateful for all the quality entries submitted, including those not published in this issue. We encourage submissions for the next issue, knowing that this literary magazine is the product of all the students and faculty, not the staff alone.

An excerpt from the poem, "The Cloths of Heaven" by W.B. Yeats may express it best:

"But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly, for you tread on my dreams.

Ivey D. Lawrence, Sr.
Editor, *TJC Touchstone*



ONE DAY by Larry Chambers

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About the title:
A distinctive streak left on a black touchstone when rubbed with genuine silver or gold was a foolproof test which allowed ancient civilizations to trust using coins in trade. We trust that you too, will find genuine distinctive elements of value in the *TJC Touchstone*.

Carolyn Hendon
April 1986

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The Genesis of Dreams

by Elaine Graybill

When I was a child my ideas about dreams came from the books that my parents gave me. "A Child's Garden of Verses," "Andersen's Fairy Tales" and "Grimm's Fairy Tales" were among my first books.

I can still remember the illustration and the verse from "The Land of Counterpane:"

I was a giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow hill,
And sees before him, dale
and plain,
The pleasant land of counterpane.

The illustration showed two cherub-like creatures dreaming of sailing ships. This poem taught me that you had to be sick, and in bed, in order to dream. You spread your toys out in front of you, fought great battles, had wondrous adventures, and always emerged the victor. I also believed that a counterpane was a window, a vantage point from which one could see the whole world. I know differently now, but, in my imagination, a counterpane was, and still is, a springboard to dreams.

From the Brothers Grimm I learned that, in order to dream, you had to wear frothy gowns, spun with threads of gold. The griffins would transport you to a world of mystery and delight. I would stare for hours on end at the picture of the doves who found a ball gown for Cinderella. The art nouveau illustrations nourished and fed me for many years. I still have my book, and often finger the pages, grateful for the world of fantasy.

In my early teens I thought that dreams happened in special places. You had to be in a hammock on a lazy afternoon, or in a canoe, watching the reflections dance on the water. The beach, at sunset, was another place where dreams were made to happen.

Then, during a period of fervent poetry reading, I thought that you had to go to faraway places like Kubla Khan or Byzantium. Paintings were as important as books, and I remember a reproduction of Andrew Wyeth's "Christina's World" that hung on my wall. Whenever I was tired, I would lift up my eyes, and enter another space.

There is a time period in my life when a time and space for dreaming became less well-defined. Time was compressed into a busy life of family responsibilities. Blocks of quiet time were a luxury. There were only a few moments to be snatched at random, even fewer to be savored.

There were 20 minutes a day that were mine. During the evening news, I would prop up my feet, put my head back on the pillow and place a book by my side. I was just about ready to be lost in *reverie* when a little voice would say: "Mother, is your *peace and quiet* finished yet?" I would smile, and think of my counterpane.

Now, at middle age, my dreams are still nutured by my reading, but I have no romantic illusions about places for dreaming. Every day I have fifty, delicious minutes to dream. I slip into my car, or "my office," as one friend calls it, and ease my way out of Tyler. I write, edit, give speeches, and problem-solve on my way home. In my cavern of clutter, surrounded by pieces of papers, bills, books and yes, empty coffee cups, I indulge myself and dream.

This time and space for dreaming has become so much a part of my life that I resent any interruption. This can be confirmed by the following conversation that often takes place in my car:

"Does your Mom *always* talk to herself, or is she talking to us?"

"Uh huh, but don't mess with her. She's dreamin'."

THE ROAD by Beverly J. Davis

There Is a -no a

by Tomas Pollard

There is an empty beach beckoning me
-no a lonely rock drawing me
towards the sea.

There is a red, glowing horizon staring
-no a single star leaving
away from me.

There is a lonely lady lamenting a death
-no a rejoicing woman out of breath
breathing heavily.

There is a broken tree falling down
-no a beautiful one bowing to the ground
as a man sighs deeply.

There is a happy husband whistling in the air
-no an unloyal lover off on an affair
holding his head high.

There is a content man enjoying life alone
-no a lonely man wanting company as one
unloyal lover walks by.

There is a lovely lady waving at me to follow
-no she is signaling to her beau
planning a rendezvous for the day.

There is a passionate meeting in the woods
-no an innocent walk misunderstood
as friends embrace by the bay.

There is a man threatening a lady with a knife
-no a husband cutting an apple for his wife
as friends pass by.

There is a lonely man inspired by a bee
-no a brother meeting his lost family
aroused suddenly.

There is a man studying forestry
-no a nosy gossiper following me
as he collects bark.

There is a rising star shining brilliantly
-no a blue dye covering the sky
as a day is born out of the dark.

A Day in the Life Of

by Ann D. Miller

No, no . . . I'm all right now. My feet are finally warm. Yes, my rear-end too. I guess my circulation is just not good anymore. Just leave me alone now; I want to drink my tea while it's hot and meditate for a while.

Meditate, indeed! They just think I'm a senile old woman with cold feet who talks to herself all the time. Blast it! My feet have always been cold this time of year! For that matter I've always talked to myself, too. What's wrong with that? You put a tune to it and it's okay, but just let 'em catch you carrying on a decent . . . or indecent . . . conversation with yourself and you've got Alzheimer's or you're just nuts. Well, nuts to them! I've got my own dreams I can dream and feelings I can feel and I can be as young or as old as I want; or I can even be somebody else if I decide. I like to go into those rooms in my head and lock the doors, and have my little fantasies as I please. I can answer the knock on a door and open it to the handsome young man I knew . . . who loves me and wants to be with me and . . . Yes! He's knocking on the door now. I've got to get myself straightened up and . . . and . . . what will I say? No. I don't say anything. I just open the door. I look good today . . . it doesn't matter that I have on old jeans and the sloppy blue shirt. He likes it. After all these years! He stands there with his wonderful smile and gentle eyes and I can see that he's been waiting for this just like I have. I hold out both hands to him . . . he takes them, then steps into a warm embrace. And he takes my face between his hands and he softly kisses me . . . and it's just like it was when we were sixteen.

What? What? No, I wasn't talking to you, just to myself. Well, all right, you could bring me some more hot tea, I suppose. Have you got something sweet to go with it? I do need a cookie or sweet roll or . . . Oh, I'd so love some cheesecake. But, fat chance of that. I wish I had my own kitchen again . . . and my good old recliner. These pillows just don't stay right.

And I wish she wouldn't come in when I'm in the middle of my daydreams. And I wish I could make these old hands work like they should. Damn! Now I know how Grandma Lee used to feel. And she couldn't see, either. Dear God . . . I wonder if she made up stories like I do? I can remember when I was five years old, sitting in my swing in the back yard and making up adventures and songs and singing and talking to myself for hours on end. Have I always gone off into these other worlds?

The Awakening

by Johnny E. Rush

Joshua Fine sat upright with a start and opened his eyes, only to slam them shut again against the brightness of the light. The thought entered his mind, "Why is the light so bright in my bedroom where there should be no illumination?" Slowly cracking his eyes, he peered around the room and cried out loud, "Where am I?", for there was no furniture, nor walls or floor, only light. Gingerly he placed his feet where the floor should be, found it solid and realized that he could stand. Walking slowly, Joshua placed his hand before him, for if he could stand, there was a floor and so there must be a wall as well. Walking twenty feet, he still had not found a wall. Pausing for a moment he gave thought to this strange turn of events. After several moments he decided, "This must be a dream, so I'll return to my bed and close my eyes. When I awaken I shall be back in my bed." But upon turning to retrace his steps, Joshua found the bed, like the other furniture, had vanished.

Joshua prided himself on his logical mind and after a few moments, he had the answer. "As this is only a dream, I am still in my bed, so I'll close my eyes and soon it will end." It seemed an eternity had passed when Joshua heard someone calling his name. "Joshua, Joshua Fine!" Once more he opened his eyes, only to find the same blinding light. But coming towards him was a figure of a man it seemed. "Yes," Joshua thought, "It is a man, but he is an odd fellow. The man was dressed in a long white robe that seemed to magnify the light. His hair was silver, as was his beard, each neatly trimmed, with not a single strand out of place. His eyes were gray, the color of newly polished steel, intermingled with specks of gold. His voice was gentle, yet commanding, as he spoke. "Where have you been, Joshua? Why have you lingered here?" Suddenly Joshua knew that he had died, and that this must be the threshold of heaven. This man could be none other than St. Peter who had come to guide him through Heaven's Gate! Taking Joshua's hand in his, the man spoke once more. "Come we must hurry, your friends await you."

Joshua's heart filled with joy, for somehow he had made it to Heaven, despite his doubts and the many errors he had made while alive. Once more he would see his Rose, who had died years before with the knowledge that she would meet her Maker. For the first time Joshua spoke to the man who led him, "Is this Heaven? Are you St. Peter? Does my Rose await me at my journey's end?"

For the first time there seemed to be a sadness reflected in the eyes of Joshua's guide. In his gentle voice he asked, "Can it be that still you do not know, that still you are blind and cannot see? Joshua, we had hoped that perhaps you would move on, but perhaps it is not yet time."

Drawing away, Joshua spoke harshly, "What do you speak of? What do you mean move on, not yet time? Explain yourself!"

"Come Joshua. It is not far and there you will find the answer to all you ask," the man in the robe said in his gentle voice.

Joshua flew into a rage shouting, "Do not patronize me! I demand you explain and if you do not, I shall travel no further with you!"

"Joshua, my friend, I cannot, for I know not what answers to give," said the guide. "Look before you. There is our journey's end. You may remain here if you wish, but I must be on my way."

Before Joshua was an end to the light and as far as the eye could see was darkness. Into the darkness ribbons of light stretched, spanning the hues of the rainbow and more colors beyond imagination. Again the gentle voice spoke, "Come Joshua, it is there that all answers are given. See there at the center your friends gathering to receive the answers you seek." Then his guide was gone.

Though he trembled in fear, Joshua took a tentative step forward. It seemed he was drawn to the point indicated by his guide. Taking three steps, he was amidst the group gathered there. In the crowd were the people of every race upon the face of the earth and some who were far removed from mankind. Before them was a pillar of light reaching as far upward as the eye could see. The light being at once one color and all colors, blending, yet separate.

In awe Joshua bowed his head and all fear left him. To his ears came a voice sweeter than any he had ever heard. "My children, you come from many countries and many worlds. You worship many gods in many ways and yet each of you are a part of the other. All of you are a part of me and I a part of you. You are the dreams and nightmares of each other, separate yet connected through me for all eternity. As I am the beginning, so am I the end. Some stand ready to enter my kingdom and others must journey far before they cross over. Cast off your shell and stand before your brothers and sisters as you were in the beginning."

Joshua realized he was no longer Joshua, but thousands of names with thousands of lives. These lives filled with grief and sorrow, pain and sadness, happiness and love. Suddenly he felt by his side a love greater than any he had known before. Then with his Master at his side, he stepped out onto the ribbon of light that would take him to his new life and one step closer to the end of his journey.

Futures

by Robin L. Wright

Hope for today
Your dreams of tomorrow.
For life's road has
many unexpected turns.
And dreams hold those things
you want to
believe in.
And believing in something is
the first step.

Focus on one star
In an infinite sky is
Inconceivable.

by Joelle Butler

Nightly Aspiration

by Pat Buffington

Is my nightly aspiration
Genetic recombination,
Within musing reconstruction
Mental reconsideration?

Barbara

by Paul Koniecki

Moonlight flickers through my restless eyes
as subtle serenades of sullen sighs
watch beams of blue paint scenes of you
in a symphony of song and hue
As I race through Vincent's countryside
past the yellow house where canvas cried
sunlight frames the beauty of your face
as chesnut hair blows softly into space
Tell me dear Vincent did cutting suffice
for ample catharsis I'd gladly slice twice
lend me an ear to show me the way
a lover may bleed a forever away
I'm chasing her now to reason the start
for a suddenly strange and sad change of heart
This siren's song of self deceit
echoes broken hearts' distressful beat
Cast away shackles but pocket the stone
why add her hatred to being alone
Alone I'll cry upon the beach one-hundred thousand years
and in this time I'll build a boat to sail upon my tears
and on the bow will shine a light so you may follow me
for in my heart the hope for us shall burn eternally

Springtime Is Near

by Stephanie Kuna

some dread the winter
as a cold and cruel time
the harshest of all
Life's seasons, they say

as for me, I assent
to that just partially
for you see, I believe
that Winter is the time

to hold fast to hope
though Death stalks all around
to hold onto those dreams
useless as it may seem

for you see, I believe
it's when Winter's most harsh
you are oh so near
to the great Resurrection

of love, joy, and peace
when Spring comes once more

Dreams or Thoughts?

by Doug Storey

Dreams are dreams. You say, "Of course."
But thoughts are dreams which take their course,
To higher regions of the brain.
Therefore we may be profane,
And say, dreams are prophetic utterances of the brain,
With thoughts being secondary objects to gain.

Until You've Dreamed

by Abby Adams

No goal is ever set
Until you've dreamed a dream.

No challenge, completely met
Until you've dreamed a dream.

No day shows its sun,
No task is easily begun,
No soul is ever won
Until you've dreamed a dream.

Top Dog

by Tommy H. Willliams

Most everyone has owned a pet at one time, and nine times out of ten, there was one particular pet that was special, one that stood out as the favorite among all the others. That one such pet for me was a dog named Barney; he was clearly my top dog.

It was at the First Monday flea market, a beautiful, sunny, summer day in June, when I first laid eyes on him. He was sitting in a child's playpen, resting his muzzle across a small, yellow, plastic baseball bat, looking as if he hadn't a care in the world, watching the crowds of people walking past him, so unconcerned, and at peace with the environment around him. He was a dog of such incredible, breathtaking beauty, that to think a name like Barney could be attached to such a magnificent specimen was hardly conceivable. After inquiring as to the real name of the dog, I found he indeed had a title befitting the champion lineage he presented so well in his outward features. The lady whom Barney belonged to proudly spoke the title which the dog had been given long before his show ring career had begun. I remember how majestic and royal the dog appeared as I repeated his show name, just so I could hear the sound of it coming out of my own mouth," Dunscombe Farms Give Me A Tri." The very sound of the name gave me goose pimples, as my eyes danced with excitement at beholding the sight of such a marvelous example of dedicated quality breeding.

To those unfamilar to the specific qualities of a show dog, Barney hardly resembled what most people would have thought of when mentioning the breed: "Cocker Spaniel." As his name implied, he was a tri-colored masterpiece; black, tan, and white, with markings somewhat similar to that of a Holstein milk cow.

His color patterns alone were enough to disillusion most people not acquainted with such a rainbow of hues on one dog, compared to the buff cockers they had grown up with. Also a little larger than what was commonly considered the standard size, he weighed in at around 23 pounds, compared to the usual 18 pounds for the breed. Another startling feature, not found in the lesser quality cockers, was the incredibly profuse Rapunzel-like coat of hair which adorned his body, flowing and rippling, waving and bouncing, shining and glistening like a huge golden wheat field bowing back and forth across the horizon in a warm summer breeze. His coat was so flawless, so immaculate, that one might easily compare it to that of a king's jewel-laden robe with his royal subjects proudly carrying the long heavy train. Since the head structure is considered the most important and most difficult goal in breeding a show quality cocker, I carefully observed the finely chiseled details of Barney's skull. His ears were a mile long, so heavy with hair and hanging so low, they almost swept the ground. His eyes were as those of a small helpless fawn, hidden in the brush, innocently awaiting the return of its mother, cautiously listening to every sound around it and letting nothing go by unseen or unnoticed.

A few weeks after acquiring Barney, I realized that not only was he a superb example of what all show breeders wanted to accomplish in their breeding endeavors of conformation, he was also never lacking in agreeable disposition either. He was easily the most intelligent dog I had ever owned. When looking into his big, soft, brown eyes I could see his personality, so becoming to an animal of his superior quality. One minute he was like a small rambunctious puppy, trying to play and always wanting all the attention focused on him; the next minute he was Mr. Sophisticated, all business and so very serious.

Barney and I had a unique understanding of one another. Whatever Barney wanted, Barney got. He could ask for anything, and he knew I would move heaven and earth to see that he got it.

After quite a lengthy grooming session, and the key words "go and show," anyone could see an amazing transformation take place in Barney's personality. Like a young, newly graduated Marine private, head held high, shoulders back, chest out and the most sincere look of concentration imaginable, he would strut his stuff. Being an experienced show dog, he proudly delighted in being in the spotlight whenever possible.

I had always dreamed of one day owning such an animal as Barney, but never, no, not ever, did I seriously believe I would have the opportunity to see such a dog in the flesh, only in books or movies. When I reflect on the times Barney and I shared together, I realize I had more than just a quality animal. He was a devoted companion, a special friend and most importantly, he was a dream come true. Barney was truly a Top Dog.

Oreo

by Charline Wallis

The child's eyes see, amidst the haze
Encapsulating her known world.
Her Daddy, offering toys and treats,
Her Mother, giving food:
Crinkly carrots, chicken bits, a cookie for dessert.
She pulls the front and back apart,
And licks the creamy white, first thing.
Hey, please don't eat the middle
Of an Oreo so fast.

Confidently, the youth strides out
To choose a path where mists curl up,
Diffusing light. He gropes through school,
First love, first job. He knows it all,
Or thinks he knows, until there's pain,
Or gain, or loss, and foggy veils are split.
Life, with clarity of sight and taste,
Is rich. So please,
Respect the middle part.
It's just the best there is.

If clarity's extant in this muddled, messy way,
It has to be the middle, like that creamy
Cookie center, or the crispy, grainy liquid
Of a summer's melon heart:
The sweetest part. Each taste becomes
A balance now. The hard black seeds
Prove small impediment;
We've passed the white beginning rind,
Ignored the bitter ends.

While you've withdrawn, with trembling hands,
To musty mental porches,
Your dampened dignity is dumped,
And new fragrant linens billow.
The nurse is smoothing, smiling, gone —
I seek your empty gaze, your hand,
And wonder why you've worked so hard
For flat and bitter ends.

Oh, why can't we wait
And save the best part
Of the Oreo Cookie 'til last?

To Dream Again

by Abby Adams

My dreams came true when long ago
You told me that you loved me so.

Then nightmares came when we did part
And left me with a broken heart.

Peace was gone, and so was sleep,
As night after night I did weep.

But God restored my faith, and then
I could laugh, and love, and dream again.

Communistic Box?

by Doug Storey

Do you think the box is really some
communistic scheme?
Do you think that life is really, simply just a dream?
Do you search for why it is, and where it shall be?
But really and truly, is it you or is it really me?
Which ask these questions about time,
Are we sure? Does this life rhyme?
Rhyme with what? The subject may say,
I live in this box day after day,
With nothing to do, and nowhere to play?
And you think I am a game, a pawn on a chessboard,
Should you move it left, or move it right . . .
As if it really mattered?
Your manipulation is complete, my life is shattered.
Destruction of the mentality,
That is what you've accomplished,
Whether it is a dream or reality, it is now
simply demolished.
Yes, you have succeeded in destroying this life,
But not without self-destruction from much of the strife,
Which has been encountered by your box and I,
You say, "The box won!"
I say, "It's a lie!"
For if the box won,
As if it really mattered?
My world would be tainted, tarnished, and tattered,
But it is not, for I dreamed it for real?
For I do not see, neither can I feel,
Your bondage anymore,
Communistic chains fall to the floor,
And I am free to run, fly and to soar?
But in a box of two walls, a ceiling and a floor?

Predicting the Future, Presenting the Past of Two in Diapers at the Same Time Twice

by Fran Hall

To predict the future of two in diapers at the same time twice, I must present the past.

I am the mother of an only child, multiplied by three. I mean by this that each child is special to me and we share a mother-daughter closeness not seen in many large families. Ginger was not two years old when Gina was born; Gina was not two years old when Jana was born. Therefore, at times I felt I had twins; and, at times, I felt I had triplets; and uniquely, I felt I had only one child.

I began to work part-time at Mother Frances Hospital when Jana was seven months old. I remember leaving the girls on the fifth floor in the Angel Loft, as the baby-sitting service was called at that time. When they reached four years, three years and 18 months of age, they were inquisitive, as most little children are. Taking the elevator down to go home one day, one of my little angels looked up at me and asked, "Mother, if your name is Frances, does that mean that you are Mother Frances?"

"The girls" were a joy to me, an entertainment, a challenge. Each morning I would go down the roll waking up children. Ginger woke up to "Morning Glory;" Gina, with her blonde hair, was addressed with "Hello Sunshine;" Jana remained "Sweet Pea" for longer than the name fit.

Play activities seemed to influence my girls. Ginger loved her Barbie camper and spent hours making doll clothes and taking imaginary trips. Gina colored, and colored, and colored and still colors. Jana played with the Lite Brites, making intricate pictures on the screen, trying first one pattern, then another.

Personalities emerged early. Ginger was a preemie and came into the world eight weeks early, asserting her right to tell me everything. To this day, 19 years later, she still tries to assert her authority. I keep telling her, "I am the Mother."

On the other hand, Gina was the sentimental dreamer. She would love to sleep late, wake up, and watch cartoons in her gown while I brought her hot chocolate milk.

Dear little Jana was the adaptable one. She never had a pacifier or a favorite blanket. She did, however, expect breakfast when the others would let it wait until mid-morning.

As they have grown up, many cute situations have developed. Ginger, in her authoriative manner, told me one day she already knew how to drive. "Mother, D stands for drive and R stands for run." Needless to say, I asserted my authority in telling her no, she did not know how to drive.

Gina won points for her wit. I was getting ready to go out one night and she said, "Mother, I sure do like your new skirt and blouse. And that cowbell is nice, too!"

Jana liked long words. One day she said, "Make Ginger come to the kitchen, she's monotonizing the phone, and I want to talk."

With this short, sketchy past, and knowing my girls as I do, I will presume to predict the future.

Ginger, at 19, is well on her way to being a medical laboratory technician. I am amazed that she would pick a medical field and might be another "angel of mercy."

Gina, at 17, is aiming at a career in education, teaching small children, helping them color, grading their papers.

Jana, at 16, is still somewhat unsure, but I predict she will gravitate toward a law career, since she has been the peacemaker for the other two. Her high grades and persistence in finishing any goal will see her through those long years of study.

I am the mother of an only child, multiplied by three. I have had two in diapers at the same time twice. I have presented the past; I have predicted the future.

Acres of concrete
Where green seedlings used to sprout.
Look up at spring clouds.

by Carolyn Hendon

CONTRASTING DREAMS by Natalie Robison

II Corinthians 5:17

by Stephanie Kuna

O the joyful unspeakable rapturous beauty
that is called Spring

Which causes all nature to raise its voice
and lift its hands
in praise to God

But cannot compare
to the beauty of another great Spring
when a soul is reborn
and new life begins

The Answer

by Johnnie Mitcham

Is there no laughter except in my sleep?
Is there no joy when I'm awake?
Must my soul in daytime continually weep?
Does sleep bring relief? Is my life at stake?

Circumstance of life can bring such sorrow.
It can rob you of your happiness each and every day.
There must be hope to make you want to live tomorrow.
Are dreams of joy and laughter the only way?

There is a way, more simple than it seems;
To bring happiness in your life and not just
in your dreams.
Read your Bible and learn of Him; don't even miss a day.
Because Jesus Christ is the true joy of life.
He really is the way!

The Joshua Kingdom

by Barbara DuCharme

Two knights set out in a contest of wit and cunning with the victor earning the princess' hand in marriage and also in turn their heir to the throne in the kingdom of Stineorstinabente. Each of the men were granted one private meeting with the princess for a day and then after each had taken their turn, the princess would have a week to decide which of the knights she wished to marry. And so, the contest began.

Starting his meeting around midday, the first knight brought with him expensive jewels and valuable gifts to present to the princess. He spent his day wooing her with many promises of romantic starry nights and continual paradise if he would be her choice. Ending his day he took the princess' hand in his and as he kissed it softly, he whispered that he loved her deeply.

Allowing a day to elapse, the second knight then took his turn. Arriving before the break of dawn, he entered the princess' chamber and placed on her window sill a small and rather ill looking plant while she still lay sleeping. Attaching a note, the message read, "If you grant it be, I vow our love to endure with the persistence of the spirit and life of this Joshua Tree." Now, after he had placed his small token, he left the room.

Waking to the new day, the princess rose and did not even realize the gift at first. Wondering throughout the day where the second knight could possibly be, she eventually went to bed that night, not being able to sleep. As she tossed and turned in her expensively decorated room, her eyes accidently came upon the small gift upon her window sill which fell short in comparison to any of her room's belongings. She rose and approached the plant. After she read the note, she paused and then left the room. Searching out her father, the king, she told him that she did not need a week to decide whom she would choose to marry. With this, she was wed within the next week to the first knight.

As weeks turned to months, and the months turned to years, the princess began to realize that all of the promises which she had heard were just words without any substance to fill them. In turn her dreams of starry nights in love began to fade and she would spend her days in solitude.

Each day would contain the same routine. She would rise. She would enter a small cluttered library. She would sit upon an old worn chair until the day's end. Then she would turn in for the night. One day while she was sitting in her private library, there was a knock on the door. A servant entered and informed her of an accident which had killed her husband. As her eyes became glassy from the tears which were beginning to form, the servant thought that the princess was grieving her loss. Deep inside, the princess was not shedding tears of mourning, but shedding tears of sadness, for she knew that this past bonding marriage had cost her part of her youthful spirit that she could never recapture again.

As the tradition of the kingdom stated, the princess was expected to mourn her husband's death for one month in the confinement of a room. Seeing no true difference in her normal lifestyle and this procedure, she would continue to spend her days in the library — alone. It was during this time period that a very strange occurrence took place. While looking for a book on a top shelf, she came across a small plant. A note which was attached to the pot, she took in hand and read for the second time. Read for the second time, yet understood for the first time, the note began to make a clear statement to the princess.

In a matter of hours, she had sent out a small band of men in search of this author with the orders to bring him back to her at the castle. It was merely a day's time before this man was brought in front of the princess. Dressed in a wardrobe fashioned for a grand ball, the princess with an air of nobility mixed with a bit of insecurity waved the servants to bring in this knight of many years. Entering and bowing in front of the princess in order to fulfill the kingdom's rulings, the knight stood shoulders back, chest out, in a motionless position. The first words were spoken by the princess.

"Years ago you vowed your love to me and now since my husband has died, I am asking if your love for me has endured with time. If your love still remains, I ask you to take my hand in marriage and become the new heir to the throne."

Hesitating for a few moments, the knight, then with very distinct words, spoke to the princess while never allowing his eyes to wander from hers. "Yes, I did vow my love to you years ago and yes, my love does endure as I had promised. I do not feel the question is of my love now, but of yours. Years ago, you thought you knew what love was and if you hold those values the same today, I am sorry to say that I will not marry you, for you truly do not know what love is."

With this the knight turned to leave the room only to be restrained by the princess' words. "Do not blame me. How was I to know? I was so young. I was too young," she began in a very rushed manner. "How was I to see within the hearts of men? But now that has changed. It is different," she added, and then slowly in a passionate tone of a lover finished. "Now, I see that the sincere heart you once offered is the same enduring spirit, within this plant, having little to live on or to give, persistent in its growth. I long for such a love of persistence and growth."

"It sounds as if you are slowly beginning to understand," stated the knight in a surprised tone, "but I do not trust the love you offer is the same love you long for." Once again turning away from the princess, the knight left this time never to return again. Struck by these words, the princess stood alone, as she had throughout most of her life.

Ordering every individual in the kingdom to appear in the courtyard the next day at noon, the princess took her place on the balcony which overlooked the kingdom subjects. She spoke briefly and to the point. "I have asked you here today in hopes that I can help each and every one of you learn from my mistake. I was once given a chance, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and my heart was too clouded to see its truth. So that others will not make that same mistake, I am going to root this small plant in the orchard along with many others of this kind. Inside this forest I will have a placard which will read. 'May the love of each man and woman contain the same enduring spirit of these trees.' All are welcome to stroll through the forest and I hope that all

will take the time to understand its meaning." Bowing to her servants, she returned into the castle to her private library and this is where the princess remained until her death.

When the burial of the princess took its turn in history, the princess was granted her last wish. "This was found on my precious daughter after her death," stammered the king in a solemn voice, "and I wish to read it to you. 'Upon my death, I wish for each of you the reality which was only a dream to me — to know love. My last wish is to have the kingdom renamed Joshua.' "Looking to his people, the king said in a majestic manner. "So it be. This land from now on will be referred to as The Joshua Kingdom."

The Song

by Christopher Walker

My mind began to wander, one morning a few days ago;
I usually stop it 'fore it starts, But for this once I let it go.

My mind took me for a ride, far from my present location,
To a time not far removed, but of a different situation.

My mind recalled a time and place, when you and I were together,
A time that I soon remembered, as being quite pleasant weather.

Although it's been some time ago, my memory of you is quite good.
I especially remember you in the moonlight; Beside the lake you stood.

My mind continued on this trip, taking me along,
And you remained there also, only you — became a song.

The music filled the air, a melody so sweet,
It could have been only you, 'cause it swept me off my feet.

As the trip continued, the music began to fade;
I knew I'd have to act, if the music I were to save.

I stumbled in the darkness, groping for a tune.
I hoped that it wasn't too late, for I didn't want to give up so soon.

I finally caught a note, floating on the wind,
But I knew I couldn't keep it, 'cause without it, the music would end.

So to the breeze I tossed the note, hoping that it would return,
But I couldn't help but thinking — maybe I've been burned.

My tears began to flow, as that lone note flew out of sight,
I wondered if you'd ever miss one, on some lonely night.

Then the trip was over, but on you my thoughts remained.
The tears became reality, and I felt my heart was chained.

Oh, how I hope you understand, I tried to let you go,
But you had already touched my heart, How much, I didn't know . . .

Seven Episodes

by Pat Buffington

I drift off into my world, a lovely imaginary place, and a sequence of sensations, images and thoughts pass through my subconscious, leading me to myself.

I am in a very idiotic mood, behaving very silly and giddy most of the time. I am very optimistic and blissfully happy. I am full of energy and become ecstatic over the smallest of joys, usually laughing at myself and laughing into an hysterical euphoria. The world is grand.

Now I withdraw into myself, feeling sad and lonely. I am usually very anxious and restless at times throughout the day, feeling mentally exhausted and all around miserable. I am easily disappointed, bored and frequently feel jealous. I agonize over every thought because I become so indecisive. I am very indifferent to activities or to which friends are around me, unwilling to attempt any change, attitude, behavior or thoughts.

Changing, I become very cold towards my friends, and puzzled by their behavior, I become withdrawn. Being very suspicious and extremely cautious of those around me, I often feel and behave very smug and prudish. I respond disbelievingly towards anyone telling me anything and usually end up exasperated during all conversations.

Again, I am happy with all, frequently meditating, self contemplating, always appearing to be studying and concentrating on some aspect of life. I feel very confident, optimistic and find most everything interesting. I am very satisfied with life and my part in it.

In this very negative state of mind, I am usually behaving very aggressively. I am irritated by anyone and anything, being very obstinate and easily enraged and verbally abusive. I am disgusted about something, disapproving of everything, while I suspect the worst in everyone. I am extremely frustrated with myself and this mood I am in. I plain do not like myself.

I switch to feeling very happy and curious about all sorts of things. I behave bashfully and shy and appear to be on the quiet side. I feel demure, safe and innocent. I am thoughtful of all that comes around me, though at times I can be envious of others. Being mischievous minded and having a tendency to carry things too far, I end up feeling very sheepish and embarrassed by my childish behavior. I am very childlike and playful for the most part.

Confused . . . I feel very sad, lonely, and all around miserable. I allow my feelings to be hurt very easily. I take on guilt and turn it into one big trip. I am always apologizing and regretting everything I say or do. I am often paranoid about my surroundings and people, feeling very perplexed as to my role in life's existence as to why I am here and alive.

Upon recognition of my seven selves, I awaken, curious as to who I am. Dreams are the forthcoming of reality by way of gathering my thoughts while my mind is at rest.

My dream is my guidance to respond in daily life as my conscious reflects the seven episodes of behavior.

My reality is the instinctive choice to be who I am today, for any personal state that is dreamed of becomes a reality of a kind.

Which part of which episode will replay today?

Wintertime sunlight
Beaming through frosty windows
Warms my dreaming cat.

by Carolyn Hendon

My Love Is Lost

by Susan Blalock

I held it as a handful of sand,
Clenching my fist to hold it there.
Yet, bit by bit, the grains slipped
Through my straining fingers.
Now, there is nothing
But memories, of every smile,
Every word,
Every kiss.

For it was not into my ear you whispered
But into my heart.
It was not my lips you kissed
But my soul.

When I opened my tired hand
And found my love gone
I trembled
Dying.

My eyes shimmer with tears
Always close, they never come.
I struggle to hide my deadness,
Conceal this desert, my soul.

My mind is fighting to live,
My listless heart asking, "Why?"
My handful of existence has vanished.
My love, all of my love, is lost.

Illusion

by John Saleh

I thought of you at every sunrise,
Saw you in every autumn moon,
Longed for you when fog and
rain caressed.
But when we came face to face,
And all our present flaws were bared,
My dreams were only of our past.

I'VE FLOWN IN DREAMS by Charline Wallis

Outlet for Expressions

by Jocelyn Cooke

Poems are such lovely things
with words we cannot know.
Full of feelings otherwise
we would never show.

In a hidden book or a secret song
the truth is soon to flow.
Through a melody of days gone by
we need that truth to grow
and show
the feelings that we know.

Poems are written by a brook,
at midnight while in bed.
A poem's the outlet for all the feelings
locked inside my head.

Unbridled thoughts or worldly things
give light in which to shed
my merriment and wonderment of
the living and the dead.

I've read
to shed, some light; while I'm in bed.
For thoughts
and poems, which always filled my head,
Are feelings that I know
but showing them I dread.

What's That Noise Upstairs?

by Fran Hall

C.C., the cat, was a three day hidden treasure, waiting quietly under the twin bed, eating contraband food, playing with bits of ribbon and smuggled outside only for necessities. She was confident of her castle and eager to explore.

Only a petless teenager could see the good in that kitty cat. She was found wandering aimlessly, dirty, hungry, alone. Scrawny and pitiful, with eyes seemingly too large for her head, the cat had managed to attract attention. She was a crippled orphan, much like "Wednesday's Child" on television.

Surely such an insignificant little rag of fur could be hidden away. An intensive barrage of reasons for a pet could be used until parents gave way, like so much water finally wearing away the stone.

It was just an ordinary evening meal, meat and potatoes, bread and gravy, a soggy salad that had waited too long for Father to come home. The three girls were eating quietly, each one intent on her own thoughts.

The phone rang, jarring the mood, making everyone jump, putting urgency in the air. Each teenager questioned, without a word, who would answer the call.

This time, the long arm of Father grabbed the receiver first, so quick that the mouthpiece was at his ear. After figuring out why the telephone didn't respond to his answer, he grew very serious with a sincere attack of indecision and disbelief. The voice at the other end of the telephone told him to go upstairs and look under the twin bed as very soon little noises would be heard. Should he really go upstairs? Surely not, but then, why not? "What's that noise upstairs?"

With instinctive terror on their faces, the girls watched Father leave the table and ascend the stairs. Was that a traitor on the telephone?

Sure enough, under the bed was a thing, a flea catcher, a menace, a fur shedder, a responsibility, a peacemaker, a bargain tool for both sides. This little invasion of privacy represented a threat to the parents, a welcomed companion to the girls, a battleground for wills.

It was decided the cat must leave in three days. On Monday, she was named C.C. after Father, and she ventured out of the bedroom, like a cautious hunter in a jungle forest. Her gait was unusual and she did not lie down; she crouched, then plopped down, settling more comfortably, assuming a dictatorial regal aura.

On Tuesday, she played and rolled down the stairs. C.C. found all sorts of cute places to hide. She sat at the back door, begging with those big eyes, to go outside just a few minutes. She ate very little and made no messes to clean up.

On Wednesday, she was company for Mother all day, and even took a nap on the bed with Mother, snuggling closer and closer. Father read the sports page while C.C. read "Garfield" sitting on his lap.

On Thursday, Father went to work, as usual. Mother went shopping for just a few things. The girls went to school with extra good behavior. C.C. went to her basket bed and slept, secure in the love and attention she had generated from all those around her, knowing she would never hear the question "What's that noise upstairs?" again.

"Remember the sea,"
Conch says quietly to me.
Ebb tides are breaking.

by Debby Donnelly

Pond's mirrored surface
On a warm and cloudless day
Mother nature sighs.

by Jerry Barnett

Attitudes

by Gary Hall

At Christmas, many years ago, I received a Christmas card, from someone at the time almost a stranger, containing in a few words a personal message that was as memorable and helpful as any I ever encountered.

I was 21, recently discharged from the service and was working at the Proctor and Gamble plant in Dallas, with the goal of starting college in September of the following year.

It was my job, as a "slideman," to stand by a conveyor belt, remove 24 pound cases of soap, stack them on forklift pallets, all in a continuous motion, for eight hours each workday, standing in one spot. As might be imagined, the job required mainly a great deal of self discipline.

I was largely an irresponsible and unreliable youngster, requiring close supervision in order to maintain any order in the workplace.

At this particular Christmas, I had been on this job only a very short while. I knew hardly anyone since in the five years I had been away from home mother and dad had moved across the state. I wondered who would be sending me anything in the mail as I looked at the envelope. I didn't get much mail of any kind in those days.

It was from my Proctor and Gamble supervisor, Mr. Floyd Shafer. He wished me a Merry Christmas and then added, "I want to thank you for the good work since you have come with us," signed, "Floyd."

I was moved by the message conveyed by his choice of words. I inwardly knew I did not deserve the compliment since I also knew I was not in fact performing good work. But the unmerited compliment has always made me wish I had done good work for him. How many times, too late, do these awarenesses give us pause? I wish I could rework the year for you, Mr. Shafer. I declare that I would stack and ship soap like nobody ever did. How terrible it is to learn and appreciate something too late.

Actions may not always speak louder than words.

TRAVELING by Larry Chambers

Emotions

by Jocelyn Cooke

I cannot have any feelings.
There is no other way
if I intend to survive this world
and live from day to day.

There are no real emotions.
Just cater-cornered fears
to block me in on either side.
I wish I were not here.

To play with my emotions
and change them to a stare.
To make me feel like others want
it does not seem quite fair.

What if I want emotions?
A smile, a slap, a cry.
Should I just throw it all away
and let me die inside?

Shadows of Guidance

by Ivey D. Lawrence Sr.

There was a man who had not one for friend.
Her perished lone without one in the end.
He told me ere he passed away,
"It's not the games that people play;
Uncaring values we should all amend.

"I lived my life of selfish with a song
And justified as right what was my wrong.
Spent all my nights in dreaming gain
And all my days in living vain,
Complaining of all others all along.

"Now, time has passed the bottle back to me.
It's my turn now, to drink of misery.
The rest of time, I'll spend alone
And suffer most when time is gone;
But I want you to tell the folks for me:

'It's not the one that's begging needs the most.
He'll make it if his helpers more than boast.
It's the one who's quit his heart,
Who doesn't feel the hurting part,
He's the living dead; a soldier quit his post.'"

I think upon the words the loner said.
Resounding are his words inside my head.
Losing causes I must try;
Win them over by and by;
Requested from my father's dying bed.

Seecrit Dreem

by Ivey D. Lawrence Sr.

Sum fokes
Chanjes dreems like chanjin soks

Not me
I jus wanna lern

Caint chanj wats deep in me
Or you

Fire dont warm harts
Jus burn

So if I new mor good
To do

I no youll gree with me
Iud no

Wat it took to glee yur lif
With mor of best happy

I dont no much
But wat I do

I no
I jus wanna lern

DAY DREAMING by Larry Chambers

Our Wildest Dream

by Tom H. LeTourneau

It was peaceful that afternoon with only the sounds of an occasional car passing by, the fan gently humming and the curtains ruffling as the wind blew through the window. I had been sipping a tall cool glass of tea, the ice melting and forming a puddle on the table, as beads of water rolled down the outside. Then just as I allowed my sagging eyelids to finally come to rest, the peace and my daydream about an ocean cruise were shattered by the sound I had come to fear, the screeching of the school bus coming to a stop in front of the house and the whirlwind of potential havoc I knew was Brandy, jumping out.

Brandy is a fitting name because, like the liquor, she comes on as an innocent child, but once she has made her way past the heart, she starts a fire in your stomach. Her slinky long eyelashes, big green eyes and charming smile serve to seduce the beholder into believing she must be a sweet child. The truth is that she is a virtual grab bag of emotions and attitudes. Her frenzied hair and clothes that look like they've been slept in are proof that she is only interested in the important things in life, such as wrestling. Her two missing permanent front teeth and perpetual bandages in changing locations are evidence of her undying need to challenge laws of physics and gravity. This was exemplified one pitch black night when she decided to take a bike ride with zero visibility. She and another child of dubious intelligence had a head on collision of such a violent nature both bikes' tires exploded.

Probably the most endearing qualities Brandy possesses are her energy, vitality and the ability to take the simplest of tasks and turn them into something monumental. I have learned that you must be specific in anything you ask her to do. Simply ask her to clean her room and she begins by completely dismantling the entire room: furniture, clothes, games, etc., will be in one huge heap in the center of the room with a small pile of trash (which was all you wanted picked up in the first place) beside it. When you want her to wash the dishes, you must use the words, "dirty dishes," or when you return, every dish, pot, pan and glass will be covering the counters and floor. She is a four-foot version of a nuclear power plant that has had a meltdown.

My wife and I consulted both medical and psychological doctors in an attempt to find an off switch to this energy flow, or at least a dimmer. My opinion of these professionals was diminished by the obvious dodge that was unanimous among their answers: "She's very bright and needs attention." That's easy for them to say. They're talking about spending even more time with a child that has all the self control of a greyhound watching a rabbit saunter by, this child that was described by her teachers as having "a round bottom" because she kept rolling out of her seat. Surely they are joking.

The daydream shattered, Brandy ran across the lawn, flung open the door and announced "I'm home." Smiling that broad beautiful smile, she sat on my lap and kissed me on the cheek. Just before I could say something about the condition she had left her room in that morning, she showed me the picture she had drawn of us in art class that day. Written across the top was "I love Tom." What a dream that child is!

Midnight Blue Topaz

by Catherine Starkey

Every Christmas, Stoner Goldmunn, First Vice-President of Futura Computronics Inc., spreads his wealth with the hirelings and to reject his invitation is unheard of. The drinks and food are plentiful and delicious which compensates for the boredom. It was here that I accepted that last drink, knowing full well that I already had enough, but I was distracted by Andrea's grand entrance. I was already feeling mellow as I watched her descend the short staircase to the party room. She looked stunning from head to toe.

The sleek-fitting black organza gown that wrapped her down to her knees was adorned with a matching set of jewels. In the cleft of her bodice she wore a large, but tasteful, clip of blue topaz encircled with faux diamonds. Smaller, but similiar, dangle earings dropped from her earlobes and even matching mini-clips clasped her black silk sandals. The spaghetti thin straps on her gown emphasized her pale shoulders and her natural beauty rivaled her jewelry.

Andrea was a girl on the move 'up' — and interested only in men that could help her get there, which left this office-boy way out of the picture.

I remember my hand bringing that last drink to my lips and even spitting out the scotch, which I detest . . . but that which followed is vague and spotty. I don't know how I got from the houseparty across the avenue to the circle that stands at the park entrance, but I do recall trying to straighten my body up against the marble base that supports the statue of a local patriot.

I can see the lantern style street lights that line the path toward the gardens, and I remember veering off to the left where I noticed a stack of two by fours neatly piled in preparation for some construction work. Horizontal was how I wanted to be as I joined the pile and luckily a high row of hedging kept me out of view. My head was whirling as I tried several ways to get comfortable. The night got darker and I was just about to enter dreamland when I heard a scuffle. Angry voices exchanged abuses. The dispute was incoherent, so I tried to see what was going on between the hedge branches. I thought I heard the name Andrea but all I could see was dark clothing. This continued until a switchblade sprung open and blood gushed from the left ribcage of one of them. I closed my eyes tightly and prayed for sleep, so you can imagine my relief the following morning when I was awakened by the stream of sunlight across my face.

I tried to spring from atop the two by fours but the body rebelled. When I was upright, I cleared the sand from my eyes with my fingers and then ran them through my hair. I used my forearm to flake off the splinters of wood I had gathered up overnight, and gingerly stepped down the path — once again thankful to be awake and free from that horrible nightmare.

I reprimanded myself for over indulgence and promised myself never to do that again. By now, I was in full step in that tranquil setting that only an early Sunday morn brings, when my eye caught a bit of glitter on top a trash pile in one of those mesh garbage cans. I approached it to find a left sandal adorned with a blue topaz clip and some dried crimson drops across the instep.

THE FOOL AND ME by Robert W. Hare

The Edge of Life

by Dorte Holm-Larsen

Dream
but be aware
of the nightmares
wake up
realize that a dream
can come true
but be aware
that too much dreaming
can make your life
a nightmare.

Reversing a Nightmare

by Dorte Holm-Larsen

I use
You use
everybody uses,
much more than we need.
Why do we break the natural chain?

Too busy using using
I don't
You don't
nobody gives
enough love, care or consideration!

Let's reverse this nightmare!
is that an impossible dream?

Nightmares and Dreams

by Lisa Harden

Nightmares and dreams of a
different kind—
Enlighten my soul—
And frighten my mind.

Nightmares of a love long lost—
Who broke my heart—
At a major cost.

Dreams of a love brand new—
Who will love me long—
And forever be true.

Time

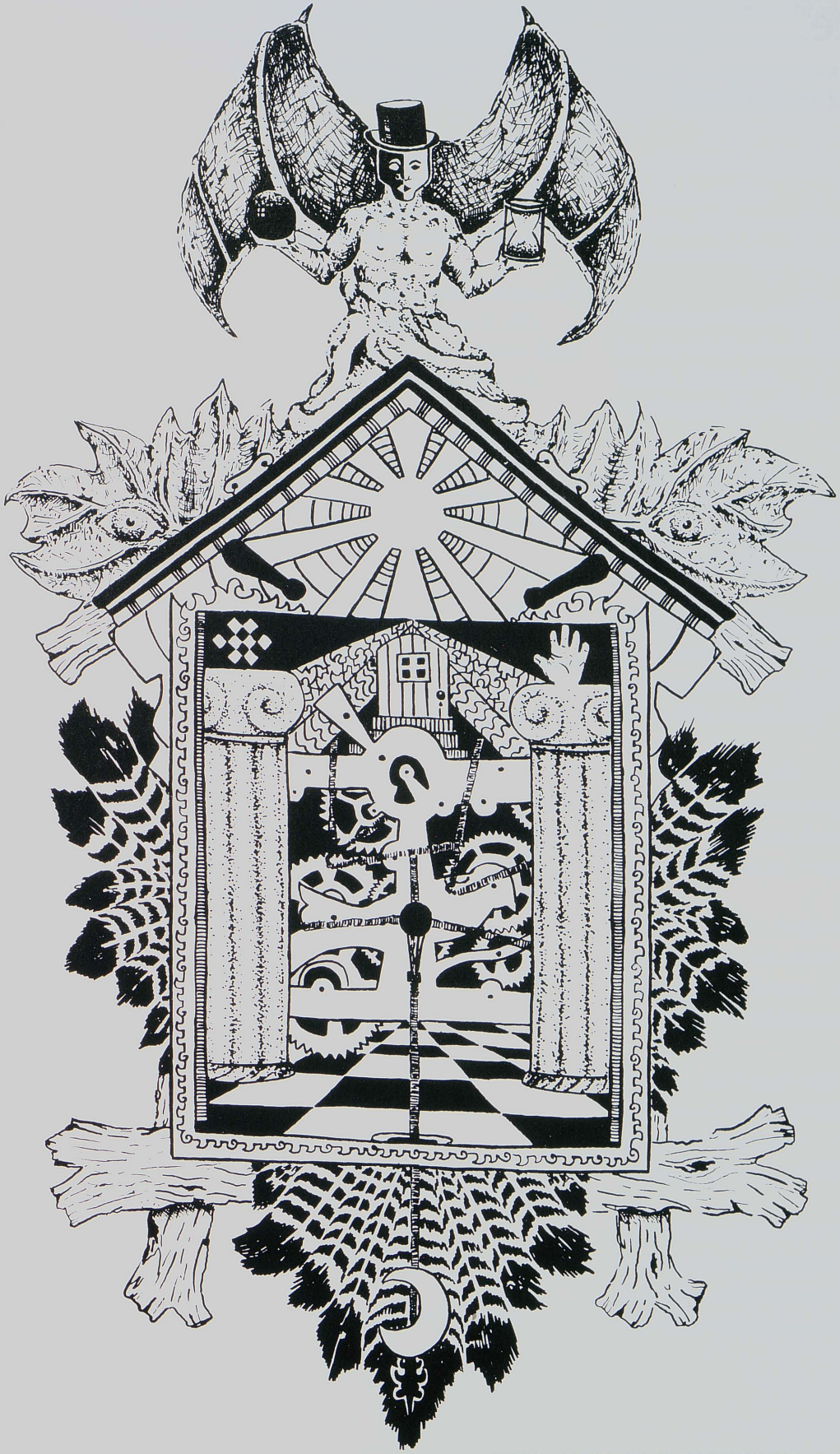
by Larry Chambers

Placed in time, at different times
Passing through the same experiences
Growing at different rates,
Separated by time.

Trying to catch up,
With a point in mind
Oh, to be in another time,
But time will not allow.

Time shared with another, passes so fast
Looking into the eyes, one sees a time
Out of reach, a time of one placed in time,
Out of time.

Why does time . . .



SUBCONSCIOUS CLOCKWORK by Suzanne Burris

White

by Tomas Pollard

Paint, she paints with white paint,
only white paint.
She paints a white portrait with paint,
only white paint.

She paints her purity pompously,
on the canvas, the paint reeling.
Once creating in happiness, joyfully,
now in ennui, painting with new feeling.

For one does not paint out of love, but out of pain.
Oh, if only it would rain!
And, wash away her sorrow.
So, she could paint love tomorrow.

For love to her has become a white cloud.
Something untouched, unreachable,
that appears, disappears ununderstandable;
a lost child seen far off in a crowd.

Yes, love is to her snow, white snow
held, surrounded by a warm hand,
melting out returning to the land
to leave the empty hand alone and cold; so,
on, onward in pain her cold hand paints
painting a white picture with white paints
letting her purity show.

With crests of waves she paints love
carrying out to sea a pure white dove.
White crests made of a wave's bitter end
smashed against a beachhead after
a million mile journey mocking laughter.

Painting her longing, portraying her pain,
Oh, if only it would rain!

Deep in the desert
Little drop of water falls
From a cactus thorn.

by Paula McAfee

Water and Thirst

by Lori Thornton

Cotton, so dry,
Dry and thirsty.
Thirsty, so thirsty for water!

Begging, for cool,
Cool, clear water.
Water! Please, water, just a sip!

Stretching, can't reach,
Reach, just almost
Almost, but always too far!

Awaken, no dreams,
Dreams and nightmares.
Nightmares, of water and thirst!

Gulping, my cup,
Cup of water.
Water, on night table by bed!

Whispers in the Night

by Angie Forsythe

Sweat drips off my brow,
I feel death very near.
The air so still and silent—
Why does death come here?

A sudden rush of wind
Whirls at my feet
Sending chills through my body.
Darkness becomes deep.

I whisper in the silence,
But my voice cannot be heard.
Where am I now?
I'm floating like a bird.

Spinning in a circle,
The world begins to fade.
Why is this happening?
From mistakes I have made?

I feel someone's presence,
But I cannot open my eyes.
I try to awake from sleeping.
Is this how people die?

So I dream of death.
Is death not eternal sleep?
Why do I dream of sleeping?
Please wake me as I weep.

Is there a sign in dreams?
For there is no life there.
These are not dreams I'm having—
I say these are nightmares.

Death so dark and cold
Breathes chills upon my life.
It burns in my heart
As though it were a knife.

And although it makes me fear,
I feel much at peace and still
You can't wake me now.
My dream has become real.

I Was Ready to Live

by Fred Plunkett

Out of all the seeds I was picked out:
Yes, I was chosen to find what this world is all about.
I am a very, very tiny seed,
Yet I will bloom into a beautiful flower, not some weed.
I am here now safe from the world's trouble and doom;
I cannot wait to free myself from my mother's womb.
As a baby I can eat and weep
And then have my mother sing me to sleep.
And at the age when I am considered grown,
I will leave my parents and be on my own.

I have eyes, little fingers and little feet.
I just know my life will not be bitter and sweet.
A little longer and I would have been set free,
But today my mother decided to kill me.

Fondest Dream

by Susan Blalock

How strange when an illusion dies . . .
It's as though you've lost a child,
Whom you've cherished and protected
Against the wilds of the storms,
The hurts in this frightening world.

Hysterical frenzies pressure you.
Your precious, virtuous dream has been taken.
Torn from your defensive, guarding breast.
Next, a morose loneliness decends.
You become a pitiful stumbling creature
Lost in the woods of despair.

Suddenly you see a light.
You straighten and walk with steady footsteps
Into the sun.
Time has done her work.
Your dream has gone, yes —
You light a candle in your heart
In remembrance of something
Never to be recovered.

But deep in your soul.
In an embryonic state
Another illusion is maturing,
Waiting to grow strong and radiant.
Only to be crushed — to join the other.

Reality is Here?

by Doug Storey

Is this box a dream, a being's scheme,
To make my life a mess?
While all of the time, I thought it was real,
And my brain was full of distress?
Then I thought, for-one-moment, and pondered
this in my brain,
If this box is not for real,
How could I feel the water from the rain?
The rain which leaked through the cracks of
boxes' ceiling,
Is the water not surely real?
Have I not one feeling?
Of this time, space, an unknown,
World which comes not to an end,
No communication with one thing,
I can't even send,
A postcard to my greatest friend?
Who? I do not know?
I thought there was a friend,
But could it be an object, fixed in my mind,
An object not so kind,
Neither would it let me go?
Let me go where, they may say,
An imagination of random thoughts or cause,
Because when you're here day after day,
There's no problem with the source?
Of information which flows back and forth.
Through and through, a brain,
Which is not there, neither is it here,
Some say it is therefore, insane,
I say why? Because of thoughts,
Which are not here?
They say yes, but because of fear,
They tread no further with their proclamation,
Though we're still here under strict observation?
I say it is a thought,
They say all thoughts are gone?
Where? Do thoughts go?
Into a dream? I do not know?

GLEEFULLY DREAM A NIGHTMARE by Pat Buffington

Prophecy

by Eric Howse

From my desk, though amazed and slightly giddy from the effects of the bottle, I will attempt to relate my story. At this desk I have been now for several days, thinking.

Oh, thoughts that would shrink the sweetest glow of emotion. Thoughts — from heaven or hell — for colors like these could never have grown in my mind.

It all began with a dream, a dream so terrible yet so wonderful that my most morbid visions of unreality fail even to compare with it. Dreams of grotesque distortion I have had before, in fevered sleep. Yet on the subject of dreams I have come to one conclusion: dreams of prophecy, whether good or bad, are the most fantastic. Dreams of prophecy quietly bend the soul up to the airy supernatural. Then morning dawns, heavy as stone, with the knowledge that, truly, man's reality is relative. This weight invariably rests on my eyes.

Why do such dreams come to me? I can say honestly, with heart and mind opened to their shadowy limits, I don't know.

At first it was laughably eerie, a private dimension of myself that I simple ignored. Say, perchance, I dreamt of seeing an old friend; I would see him soon, I knew. I dreamt of blissfully holding a lover's hand, then crying as she left me; to my heart's distress, it happened. Through the years, it has continued like this, so often I would be hard put to count them all. Some did not even come true, another mystery.

At one point I decided I would tell a few close associates. Their reactions were disheartening.

Laughing, they would tease, "There's a band of gypsies down by the river, Harry — relatives of yours?"

The more dignified and sleepy of my companions simply brushed me off.

"I don't believe in such things," they snorted.

So, with a shrug, I fell back into my old routine.

Then one night, it came.

The dream began. I found myself in an office building made of money. The walls were papered with assorted bills! As heads of strangers bobbed about me, I noticed the hall we stood in was illuminated with red light. I could clearly see door after door of offices, each with a strange nameplate tacked to the door. The hall led to an auditorium. Here brown and black shadows hid most of the details. Faint light came from the immense, glowing pillars standing here and there. I felt confused at the fact that they did not reach the ceiling.

Against the far wall a large television had been set upon a low, broad pedestal. This felt to be where, though no one said so, all thoughts were focused.

As I stood in this place, my mind trying to discover what the symbols could mean, the screen blinked on. A tension seemed to crack and people in the hall and offices began moving into the auditorium. And to my dismay, as the picture began to focus, figures stepped out of the screen. They wore glittering suits, all of a different cut. Sternly eying the crowd, they arranged themselves around it. Every now and then one would speak into a small black box he held in his hand.

Then a balding older man appeared on the screen. A hush fell over the room as all strained to listen. The man wore plaid and big, tinkling clown shoes. A water squirting flower hung from his lapel. He cleared his throat and did not look directly at the camera, but off to the side. A slight giggle escaped his lips.

"Your leader," he said gravely, and at this point reached up and honked his clown's nose! I couldn't help but laugh out loud and this brought stern looks from the glittering suited figure who watched us suspiciously.

The leader appeared, whoever he was, wearing a sparkling green suit and an outrageous blonde wig. He began to speak, I listened to what he had to say.

"Hordes of them are crossing the borders, yes, crossing right now. We can win, we will win. It's not a matter of brutally domineering them as a people . . . but we will, because, well, dammit, we can. But that's not the point! The point is, I want my money, that's what I want. We can have my money and we will have my money . . ."

A voice cried out from the crowd, "Let them keep the money!"

Suddenly one of the sparkling-suited monitors sprang up, high above the crowd and out of sight.

I felt my heart sink.

Then, like a bomb, he came screaming downward and landed beside a particular young woman.

"In-betweener! She's an in-betweener!" He appeared to be furious. As his anger grew, his face turned bright red and swelled to great, hideous proportions. His eyes cracked with hate.

The crowd began mumbling to itself. Each individual turned to his neighbor, mumbled a few sounds, then turned to someone else. All seemed in unmentionable misery; spirits seemed broken.

The young woman was beautiful.

She seemed unmoved by the frightful red face before her. Even as the crowd continued its pitiful dance of denial, she remained unmoved, growing angry with no one.

Finally, disgusted and outraged by the hideous face, I started to go to her defense, when suddenly the vision faded away.

Where it had been now a hill rose before me, protected by black, leafless trees. The land and sky fused together in a strange shade of grey.

On the top of the hill sat or stood what appeared to be a large family. After closer examination, however, I realized that this was actually a communal group of sorts. Some sat on an old, faded and chipped railroad track that crowned the hill.

I thought they seemed not to notice me, when I turned and looked into the incredibly bright and clear blue eyes of a young boy. His eyes were jewels, his clothes, rags. He held out his hand, slowly, and as he did so my heart began to pound. As he uncurled his fingers I looked and noticed inside his hand he held a small, dead bird.

"What happened?" he asked.

As he said this my head began to spin as if my thoughts were racing around wildly in my mind, seeking a way out. And as I stood there, straining to keep my balance, waiting for the wild feeling to end, an unconscious bit of truth that had before been hidden, was grasped, and I understood.

I was transported away from that hillside to a place where I could look out upon the earth. I understood. I saw the world, I saw the flaking gold of the tracks and a small boy holding a dead bird and understood.

When I awoke I felt the weight of the dream in my mind, its heaviness in my eyes. I stood up and stepped into the light of the rising sun. I looked out my window and into the alleyways of the slumbering city. I wondered, with every mistake, we must surely be learning. Aren't we?

No More Nightmares

by Ivey D. Lawrence Sr.

Nicki was licking Preston's face and it brought Preston abruptly into wakefulness. The cold, damp air of the morning that had formed the frosty dew made Preston shudder. He pushed Nicki away with a gentle shove and sat up stiffly. It had been another terror-filled night plagued with the memory visions of an unforgettable past.

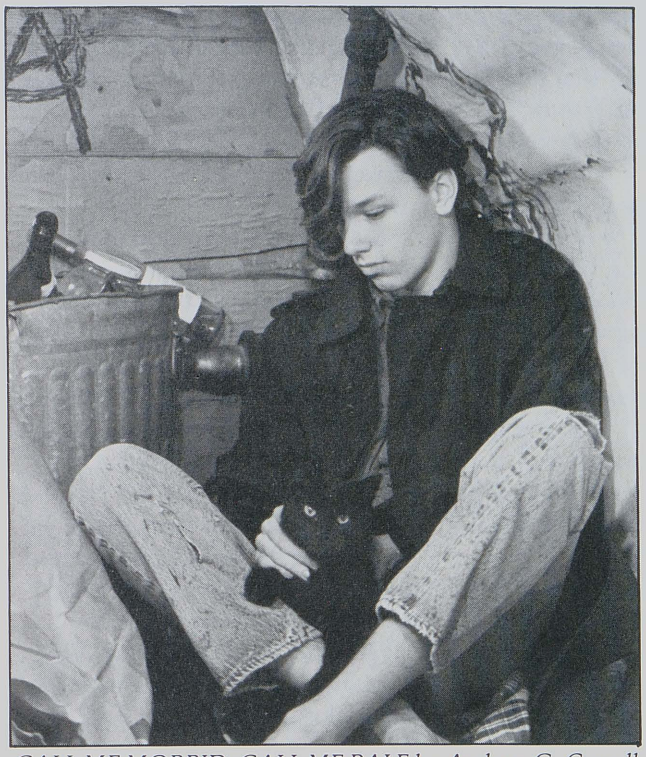
Preston rubbed his neck and looked at Nicki. The vagabond mongrel just sat on her haunches and looked back at him. With a slight tilt of her head, and an even less wag of her tail, she let out a nearly inaudible whine, then licked her chops.

"It's all right, girl," Preston said as he reached to pull Nicki close to him. "We'll rustle some chow after awhile."

He looked around. The grass was wallowed flat in the area where he sat. He could see that he had tossed and turned all night. "I guess I was hardcase bedfellow last night, eh Nicki?" He patted the dog gently on the head. He reached for the ragged, leather vest rolled up over the rock he had used for a pillow, and tried to stand up. He barely raised high enough to see over the Johnson grass when the pain hit in his right knee. It was the shrapnel wound he had received in Pleiku. He quickly shifted his weight to his left leg and regained his balance. The pain was still excruciating, yet Preston acted as if his foot had only gone to sleep and just shook it.

While he stood, he surveyed his surroundings. It was already after nightfall when he came to this place and he still did not know exactly where he was. He could see the highway barely fifty yards away and the traffic was already heavy upon it. He knew he'd better hustle if he was to not be caught on private property, for the sky was quickly getting brighter on his left.

"Come on, Nicki," he said as he pushed through the tall grass toward the highway. When he crawled through the taut, barbed wire fence on the roadside, he snagged his vest on a barb and added another tear to it. He frowned as he walked down the shoulder of the highway just outside another small town that he was doomed to enter. The foreboding that came over him was the same he experienced each time he came around where people were gathered. To Preston, it represented the loss of tender innocence and everything beautiful. It stood for fake reality and hypocrisy.



CALL ME MORBID, CALL ME PALE by Andrew G. Correll

He had not always experienced such inward trauma. In truth, he was born and raised in a small town, at least for part of his childhood. At twelve years old, he was orphaned when his parents were killed in a car wreck. He had then gone to live in Minnesota with his grandmother whom he never met earlier. She was old and always called him a "poor orphaned child." She showered him in Captain Marvel comic books and told him how Jesus died a suffering death on the cross. He never went back to school after his sixteenth birthday and as spontaneously joined the army when he became 18. After basic training, he was stationed for a short hitch at Fort Hood, then found himself being flown to Viet Nam. Small town, America, only meant lost dreams. Visions of ethereal smoke! Illusions!

Nicki was close by his side as he came to the Truck Stop Coffee Shop. There were three rigs in the parking area and Preston wondered if he could mooch a meal from a trucker. He waited.

It was full daylight when the first trucker exited into the open air into Preston's view. Preston quickened his pace to intercept him before he reached his rig.

"Hey Buddy!" Preston shouted. The trucker paused. His right hand went into his jacket pocket. "Hey, Buddy, how far you goin'?" Preston queried.

"Far as I have to!" the trucker replied. He added, "I don't take riders!"

Preston was discouraged by the trucker's hostility. "I ain't wantin' no trouble . . . nor ride, neither! I just thought maybe you could spare a buck so Nicki and me could get sump'n to eat!" he said.

The trucker looked down at the dog who hung closely by Preston's side. He laughed. "Hell, why not? Even a dumb mutt that'd choose a dopehead for a sidekick deserves to eat! Here!" He handed Preston two bills. "One of 'em's for the mutt! Make sure he gets it." The trucker briskly walked off to his rig mumbling something about hippie bums still being around.

Preston didn't mind the putdowns. In fact, he welcomed them. They at least revealed an honesty in his benefactor. He always viewed talk straight from the shoulder as integrity. He bent and patted Nicki. "Come on, Baby, now we eat!"

Nicki would have to stay outside as Preston entered to get their food. But first, Preston went around the corner to the restroom to wash up. There wasn't much he could do about his clothes, beard and hair, but at least he could rid himself of some grime.

As Preston entered the coffee shop, he became the center of attention, much like a dead fly in a bowl of soup. He ignored the stares as he seated himself on a stool at the counter.

It was very hesitantly that the waitress came over to him after a whispering conversation with the paunchy man behind the other end of the counter. "Coffee?" she asked.

"No. I've got two dollars. How much cooked hamburger will that buy?"

"Our hamburgers are a dollar thirty-five each, so I guess just one," she answered.

Preston frowned. "No, I mean just the hamburger patties; the meat, itself. How much will it buy?"

The paunchy man spoke loudly as he walked towards them from the other end of the counter. "Sell him two of 'em, Wanda."

Preston looked up at him. "Just two?" he asked.

"Take it or leave it!" returned the man.

Preston looked at the two bills in his hand. "Okay, yeah, sure!" he said.

The man's body bounced with his silent laugh as he walked off. Preston turned and looked at Nicki through the glass door. She was just sitting there looking at him, waiting. As Preston turned back, he was glad to find that the paunchy man had changed his interest to a phone call and away from him. The other few in the coffee shop had also resumed their own private interests.

Preston realized just how hungry he was when he smelled the cooking meat. It seemed to take forever to complete his order although several other orders had already been sent from the kitchen. Preston was leaning to see through the serving hole into the kitchen when he felt the hand lay heavily upon his shoulder.

"You got any I.D.?" the uniformed man attached to the hand asked. Preston was too surprised to answer. He saw the paunchy man smile with his arms folded as he surveyed the scene from across the room.

"I . . . I just want to feed my dog," Preston said.

"Yeah? Well, we don't appreciate vagrants around here. Dopeheads neither! You're coming with us. You're under arrest!"

Preston never got his hamburger. Nicki tried to get into the car with him as the policeman put him, handcuffed, into the back seat, but the policeman's partner kicked her out of the way and slid himself into the seat beside Preston, and the car drove away.

A dog has a sixth sense. Some call it just acute sense of smell; others call it intuition. Nevertheless, Nicki aspired to find Preston and because of this sixth sense, was successful, at least, partially. She found the building where he was, but could not see him. Still, she hung around expectantly. But, a dog determined to find its master, a dog with confusion and no one to care for it, soon grows weak with hunger. So it was with Nicki.

When they had booked him, the policeman did find an identification card on Preston. It was a veteran's hospital identification from Ventura, California. The county sheriff had sent an inquiry to the hospital as well as an N.C.I.C. computer check from law enforcement officials.

Meanwhile, Preston had to be moved to an isolated cell because of violent episodes after night lockup. On one occasion, another prisoner was severely injured with a lacerated jaw when Preston hit him as he grabbed Preston to awaken him from his nightmare. Nicki still waited and grew weaker outside.

A week after he was arrested, while Nicki was scavenging for water a mere block away, Preston was escorted, handicuffed, out of the jail, across the street to the county courthouse for a preliminary hearing. There was an extra armed deputy behind him, shotgun in hand, because of his reported violence and an escape report returned from the inquiry.

The locals in the small town courthouse all strained to get a look at the dangerous crazy that had invaded their town. Preston's escorts were very careful in their guardianship.

After the preliminaries of court and examination of the charges, the judge asked for the inquiry return to be read. The sheriff stood and read verbatim from the papers he held in his hand.

The N.C.I.C. had shown a previous arrest record of disturbing the peace, alcohol and controlled substance abuse, assault, disorderly conduct and commitment escape from a federal institution.

The hospital inquiry return told another story. Preston had returned stateside as a wounded, decorated veteran of Viet Nam. He had been separated and lost from his company on two occasions. He had organized a refugee shelter for displaced Vietnamese victims of the war in his off duty hours when not in combat. He had attained the rank of corporal and was discharged early only due to the severe shrapnel injuries to his legs.

After a long hospital stay, when finally he was discharged, his life had changed for him so severely that readjustment was impossible without help. The arrest record of the N.C.I.C. had occurred during this time period. After one of those arrests, he was committed to the psychiatric ward of the veteran's hospital. After six months, one day he just walked off the grounds. There was a disturbance mentioned just prior to his escape reportedly caused by Preston attempting to bring a dog onto the ward.

That concluded the hearing. The judge remanded Preston to the custody of the sheriff to be held until the federal officials could return him to Ventura.

The sun was bright as Preston was led from the courthouse. Nicki's eyes flashed as she caught sight of Preston descending the steps. She was very weak and sick, but was not deterred in making her way to him. Preston saw her just as she stepped off the curb into the street. He also saw the Coca-Cola truck.

"NO-O-O-O!" he screamed. The officer with him grabbed him for his outburst.

Nicki kept coming and only looked up just in time to see that the truck was coming, too. Although she made an effort to avoid it, her weakened condition foiled her attempt. There was no sound but the bump of the tires on the pavement as they passed over her.

"NOOOOOO! NOOO! NOOO!" Preston wailed and struggled to get free. The deputies had not seen the dog and did not know. They had been busy with their prisoner.

Preston butted the deputy that was holding him with his head. The deputy lost his footing and fell. Preston was immediately atop him and with manacled wrists, grabbed the deputy's gun. The backup officer was aiming his shotgun as Preston reached the street.

The sound of it was loud, and simultaneously, slow-motion overtook Preston. With his greatest, swiftest exertion, he only breathlessly floated in the air with the slowest of motions. Finally, pavement came up to crash into his face. He bounced and came down again, this time his cheek resting on soft, but bloody fur.

He brought his hand up. The pain was numbing. He touched the fur.

Then, there was a vision; not as he had imagined before, but different; what his grandmother had talked of: There was Jesus on the cross, but it was different than he expected. He saw the suffering, it's true. But he also saw that Jesus was the only person who could ever understand Preston's own suffering. Only He could be the friend Preston had needed.

There was a gasp and a gurgle. Preston knew he would have no more nightmares. For Preston and Nicki, there would only be peace.

Dream On

by Danice L. Deffenbach

If ever you . . .

dream of a love so strong . . .
as strong as an eagle's powerful wings that
safely lift him into the flight of life,

dream of a faith so true . . .
as true as the deep waters of an ocean that
will remain until time ceases to be,

dream of a friend so reliable . . .
as reliable as a colorful rainbow that
never fails to appear after the storm,

dream of a day so calm . . .
as calm as a cool morning breeze that
whispers songs of nature to the world,

dream of a life so exciting . . .
as exciting as a sudden lightning bolt that
illuminates the clouded skyway,

dream of a heart so understanding . . .
as understanding as a heavenly father that
patiently walks with all His children,

dream of a goal so overwhelming . . .
as overwhelming as a majestic mountain that
stands proudly in the midst of turmoil,

dream of a dream so real . . .
as real as an emotional feeling deep within that
is secretly shared between two hearts,

then dream on . . .